

Our Young People. ~~Some of the~~ <sup>Notions</sup> of Old Maids

I have been pondering over a volume of old  
printed ~~books~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>curiously</sup> ~~suggested~~ <sup>they are.</sup>  
Regretful comparisons, inquiries, speculations,  
crowd upon me. It is not that I would turn  
if the course of time ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~been~~ <sup>been</sup> ~~conducted~~ <sup>conducted</sup> ~~with~~  
that pair, or of those charming children  
pressed into graceful womanhood & gentle  
manners; pleasant enough as such  
mornings for an idle twilight hour; but  
the thought which presses on me has  
some trouble in it. The people in these  
pictures are not like the people who walk  
in our garden & sit in our rooms, &  
they are different, because the former  
generation was graced with some endowment,  
~~how~~ <sup>not very</sup> ~~hard~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>define</sup>, which is lacking in our  
Selves. How quaint are the shy little boys  
in short-jackets, & the meek maidens, &  
the modest youths, how quaint, and - how  
refreshing! Does the charm lie in the  
fashion of their clothes? No; by an effort  
of fancy you may make your maiden  
change her short-waisted gown for the not-  
ungraceful garment - such a girl would put  
on to-day; she is as lovely as before, but has  
not been metamorphosed into a modern  
beauty; that diffident retreating grace is  
not the charm ~~wherein~~ <sup>wherein</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> our girls bewitch - as  
bewitch the world they <sup>but</sup> do: And your youth, you  
may shear off his long locks & part his hair  
in the middle of his head; he is abashed by  
the change, but still regards you with the

128p2m123

same gentle, half-deprecating air. Such an aspect - is not quite unfamiliar; we meet with it now & then in courtly old gentlemen & gentlewomen, in whom is yet - preserved some sweetness of their youth. And is it not the style of the charmingly mannered persons in the old novels, in the pleasant domestic tales which make the ways of our grand-mothers familiar to us? I have myself - Charles Howard have looked, while holding gentle converse with his Good Aunt. This 'rose bud garden of girls' may have sallied forth for an airing after a morning's work in Hannah More's school-room; they are merry enough, but - brave, ~~perhaps~~ there is no abandon of attitude; propriety is not lost sight of for a moment. With such a gentle regard must Miss Austen & Miss Edgeworth's people have met your eye, & with just such modest dignity must they have borne themselves.

The aggressive manners formerly shewn but - poorly beside the pleasing repose of this former style. Is it that character also has deteriorated, that men & women assert themselves in a restless way because they no longer have worth to attract to them the comfortable esteem of their neighbors? Disloyal thought, for ~~we~~ we set our face to our generation to believe that in some way, at least - we are better than our fathers. And this falling off may it not be merely because manners are no longer held in high repute as an art, <sup>careful</sup> ~~and~~ instruction in which should be a principal part of ed.



285 p 3

education? Our grandmothers were tutored  
how to sit, to stand, how to walk & to  
speak, how to comport themselves toward  
their elders & betters, their inferiors & equals.  
They were taught to be solicitous of the  
good opinion of high & low. Were she but  
taken to a toy-shop, what would the saleswoman  
think of her? was a question therein to be  
confronted the little girl who forgot hardly  
& behaved unbecomingly. What would the parents  
by think if she raised her voice in the street?  
What would uncle or aunt think of the boy  
who did not look his friends in the face  
to make reply respectfully & promptly? The  
children of that generation were never suffered  
to forget that to be pleasing to every one <sup>they must take ~~unbecomingly~~ pains</sup> ~~was~~  
reward & strokes affect deeper than the approval to be earned from change  
or friend by becoming behaviour. In order  
that they might please, children were  
instructed to be observant, attentive  
in rendering little services, to be courteous  
in speech, humble in demeanour. In  
deed, this was natural, for as all men  
were competent to reward him with approbation,  
so would all men come to be  
regarded by the child as his betters, to  
be addressed with a certain diffidence  
& deference. And not only the grown up  
people, but his companions, the children  
he played with, were erected into the  
child's formidable critics. How good  
opinion it was well to conciliate by pious

behaviors.

What an unnatural system? says a mother. Children have faults enough now, but ~~yet~~ ~~but~~ they don't do everything for effect not trouble themselves as to whether others think well or ill of them; they act upon their own sweet natural impulses, & no quality is so charming <sup>in a child</sup> as this spontaneity. Well, according to the shewings of their own prophets, I suppose it must be conceded that the dear grandmothers were not quite natural in company. They took civil pains to turn the best side out; they did not yawn in each other's faces, nor loll in public, nor allow conversations to drop because they were too <sup>inattentive</sup> ~~lazy~~ to keep it up. They took pains to <sup>entertain</sup> ~~entertain~~ themselves, ~~to entertain themselves~~ <sup>were careful to entertain themselves</sup> ~~to entertain themselves~~ <sup>without consulting</sup> ~~without consulting~~ <sup>their own</sup> ~~their own~~ <sup>humours</sup> ~~humours~~; no doubt they brought up their children also to this sort of little social hypocrisy. But it may not be altogether a bad thing thus to turn the best side out; good qualities strengthen in the sun & air, & to make a child always show his best side may end in his having <sup>no</sup> ~~more~~ <sup>little</sup> ~~more~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~show~~ <sup>display</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>show</sup> ~~show~~. When we & they are perfect beings, we may let our children & <sup>follow only their own inclinations</sup> ~~be natural, that is, do what they like; rather than~~ ~~what they ought; now, also: the child who is allowed~~ to develop himself <sup>in his own way</sup> takes no pains to please others or to restrain himself, & grows up untaught in manner.



Self-regard put in action.

No doubt the true order of things should be

"<sup>low</sup> Noble manners, as the flower

And native growth of noble mind."

A result of the sensitive tact which perceives  
that gives pleasure or pain to another, & the  
high moral sense which <sup>recognizes</sup> ~~perceives~~ duty in  
all small kindly observances: these are  
the manners of the <sup>better</sup> ~~higher~~ order of beings.  
<sup>who are graced with</sup> ~~these~~ refinement & gentleness.

But, for the rest of the world, there is some-  
thing to be said in favour of more reserved  
manners. I think how offensive is the  
child or youth who has never been trained  
in habits of politeness; how unblushingly  
he disregards the ~~conventions~~ <sup>more</sup> the comfort  
the wishes of ~~every one~~ <sup>about him</sup> ~~but himself~~; you  
will find him in the easiest chair in the  
room, in the coolest corner, at table, his  
preferences as undeviating, ~~they are~~  
~~for~~ any moral more clearly than the ~~rest~~  
finds its way to his plate; he contrives the  
family movements, an early or a late  
dinner, a long walk, or nowalk, these are  
settled to just this same plan of his. He  
is fertile in plans. This constant habit  
preparing himself leads him to think  
slightingly or not at all of other people;  
he shows no veneration, little active  
respect; & ~~he is~~ <sup>being</sup> too much self-  
occupied to figure to himself the pleasures  
or the pains, the desires or the disappointings  
of the people he lives with, he is incapable of  
sympathy. And yet he ~~may~~ show every  
good nature about matters which do not affect

he has generous impulses,  
personally, <sup>extraordinary</sup> ~~extraordinary~~ qualities ~~of~~  
which serve to make him popular. He was  
not born a church, but has become ~~and~~ become  
he was not brought-up in wholesome ~~and~~  
of the <sup>wild</sup> ~~wild~~ ~~and~~ he has no fear  
to offend. Little desire to please; he thinks  
'anything becomes him.'

The extraordinary thing is, that the motive  
of maternal vanity alone should not cause  
mothers to make their children agreeable  
to other people. Parents delight in the praise  
of their children, yet allow them to  
behave in a way which must provoke  
censure. "Johnny, don't tease Mrs. R. dog."  
But Johnny goes on dragging the  
visitors <sup>helpless</sup> ~~helpless~~ about by its ears & tail;  
the little dog yelps, conversation is  
interrupted; his mother again desires  
Johnny to 'stop teasing the dog'; but  
to no effect; the call proves as short one,  
& Mrs. R. remarks to the next friend  
she meets, how shockingly the R.s bring  
up their children! Mrs. R. herself  
manages otherwise; she is often heard  
to ~~speak~~ <sup>say</sup> that she never allows her  
children to disturb her; & her system  
of home rule is worth our attention. Callers  
are announced while the children are  
in the drawing-room. "Children, you  
may run into the garden & play for half  
an hour." "O mamma, dear, do let-  
us stay here in the window-niche; we  
shall not disturb you in the least." "Very  
well."



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well, you may stay, but - you must make  
no noise." But the fun in the window  
nick grows fast & furious, & the ladies  
cannot make themselves heard. "Go out  
at once, children, this is not your place."  
"It let us stay this once, mamma, &  
we will promise to be so quiet!" The  
same sort of thing is <sup>again</sup> repeated, but still  
the children remain, & the noise continues.  
The visitors ~~leave a hasty~~ retreat, & as they  
leave the house, one lady remarks to  
the other, "How completely Mrs. R. allows  
her children to manage her!" "Yes, & I  
always imagined her as such a firm  
rule, you know she often says she never  
allows her children to disobey her."  
"That may be, but it is because she always  
gives them leave to do as they wish;  
the children are quite up to the situation,  
they beg in a coaxing way to be allowed  
to do what their mother <sup>may</sup> have just forbidden,  
& they get leave; they disobey with permission."  
"Even that is better than no show of  
obedience at all." "I am not sure of that,  
it is; mother & children are deceived by  
this pretence, & no efforts are made  
to secure the <sup>real</sup> actual thing. It is  
pretty enough to hear children coax  
their parents, but I doubt if it is a good  
sign; - & soon, until the friends knock  
at another door."

Such streams as these show which way  
the stream flows, & that children are not  
brought up as they used to be. Indeed, to  
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an old maid, the whole matter seems to  
lie in the nut-shell of that single phrase;  
parents seldom, now, attempt to bring up  
their children in the old sense; they make  
provision for the comfort; recreation, & education  
of the young people; but the formation of character  
& manners, & even the regulation of conduct  
are left a good deal to circumstances, &  
no longer seems to be matters for forethought  
& deliberate plan on the part of parents.

But, although 'lookers on see most of the  
game', they may not know enough  
about it to be trustworthy critics, & everybody  
knows that old maids' children are  
perfect - <sup>allow me, then, to</sup> ~~that better~~ retire, & make room for  
mothers to speak for themselves, only promising  
that the speakers, mothers & daughters, are  
both practical, both thoughtful; & that the  
elderly <sup>lady</sup> is one of the well-read, earnest-minded  
women produced in the days before  
girls were 'crammed to pass, and  
to know.'



28th June 33 9

Dear Young People Mothers & Daughters in Council.

"It would did not concern itself much about our bringing up in very day, but now, there is no escape from the Education Question; the journals are full of it; people talk of little else; improving buildings, Board Schools, or High Schools rise on all hands, improving young persons correct our old-fashioned ideas with ready alacrity."

"Well, Mother, what do you think fit all? You can judge better than we who live in the midst of this educational whirl. That it is not altogether 'Whisk! Whisk! all by itself! - Whizz! Whizz! all by steam!' - that a very real movement is going on, ~~your~~ <sup>along</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>among</sup> your own children, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~some~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~consequence~~ <sup>consequence</sup> you. You see them devote themselves to school work as men do to the business of life; they are admirably taught & would not willingly neglect a preparation or miss a lesson. Full of purpose & effort; they are engrossed with affairs that show as little to do with, as with their father's office business; & yet, believe, they miss much that the boys & I had in our home training. They you, dear Mother, appear to have engaged with